

WOMEN'S HEART HEALTH

information from

Representative Linda Lawson



Claiming the lives of nearly 500,000 women each year, heart disease is the number one killer for females. The next seven causes of death for women, including all cancers, do not add up to this amount.

Fortunately for women, with heart health education and actions for a healthy lifestyle, a lot can be done to prevent this killer. While research of cardiovascular disease continues, understanding this health threat can make a difference to save your life or the life of someone you care about.

Risk factors contributing to heart disease that you can control or work with your healthcare provider to treat include:

- **High Blood Cholesterol**—this is a soft, fat-like substance found in the blood and in all cells in the body. High cholesterol levels in the blood build up plaque and narrow the arteries and reduce blood flow. Plaques that rupture cause clots that can travel to other parts of the body causing a heart attack or stroke. It is important to find out what your cholesterol levels are because high blood cholesterol has no symptoms. Your healthcare provider can help with ways to lower cholesterol, including diet, exercise and medication.
- **High Blood Pressure**—women have a higher risk of developing high blood pressure if they are more than 20 pounds overweight, have a family history of high blood pressure or have reached the age of menopause. High blood pressure makes the heart and the body's blood vessels prone to injury.
- **Tobacco Smoking**—smoking, the most preventable cause of death, puts women at a higher risk of death or illness from heart attack as well as stroke. Even exposure to other individuals' smoke can increase your risk.
- **Physical Inactivity**—women who are physically inactive are much more likely to develop heart disease than women who exercise regularly. The American Heart Association recommends that most women get 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week. These activities can include dancing, walking, gardening and more.
- **Obesity or Overweight**—extra body fat, especially around your waist area, will put women at an increased risk of heart disease as well as other health problems. In women a 35 inch waist is considered to be higher risk. Excess body fat puts women at higher risk of heart disease even if they don't have other risk factors. It is best to reach a healthy weight and stay there. Even modest weight loss will lower your risk.
- **Diabetes**—while this most often appears in overweight and middle age women, it is also becoming an increasing problem in adolescents. Compared to women without diabetes, women with diabetes have two to four times the risk of heart disease. Many women with diabetes also have high blood pressure and cholesterol—increasing the risk of heart attack.

For more information visit the American Heart Association's website at www.americanheart.org. This site also contains information on their *Go Red for Women* heart campaign.





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Women's Heart Health and You!



What do you know about the prevention of the leading killer of women? This flyer gives you information to help combat this serious disease.

Rep. Linda Lawson

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